
Workforce Planning and the School Library Media Specialist

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ABSTRACT

This article utilizes data collected through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)–supported Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science 1 (WILIS 1)¹ survey of graduates (1964–2007) of the five library and information science master’s programs in North Carolina to consider career patterns and what these career patterns tell us about recruitment, retention, and retirement of school library media specialists (SLMSs). A life course approach is used to interpret the survey data and to suggest areas needing attention in recruiting and retaining SLMSs and planning for their retirement. Perhaps the most noteworthy finding is that a major influence on turnover of SLMSs is the lack of opportunities for career growth and development. Suggestions are offered for enhancing career development opportunities for SLMS.

INTRODUCTION

The work of the school library media specialist (SLMS) has the potential of being among the most complex of specializations in the world of information as SLMSs are called upon to be master teachers, instructional consultants, technology specialists, and leaders and administrators along with all of the traditional functions within librarianship, including both user and technical services.² The American Association of School Librarians’ (AASL) Information Power (1998) highlights the roles of teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator. The new standards for the 21st-Century Learner (AASL, 2007) only rein-

force and add to these roles as SLMSs are encouraged to consider skills, dispositions in action, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies aimed at continuing to incorporate evolving and emerging social media into the mix of instruction and information services, which moves from the school library media center (SLMC) to all reaches of the school and beyond into the homes of students as well as other places in the community.

A fundamental, but seemingly neglected concern, at least recently, involves the nurturing and support of SLMSs as they increasingly face the future with reduced budgets and staff support. Workforce planning issues were not included among those receiving attention in the AASL's important new longitudinal survey series (AASL, 2008). Among the most recent work addressing workforce supply and demand is that of Nancy Everhart (2000, 2002).

The problem of understanding workforce issues is exacerbated by the state-by-state differences in requirements, or lack of requirement, for the SLMS, with some states requiring such in any school having a minimum enrollment, others with no requirement, and a full range of variations in between. Further, education programs for SLMSs in the United States are housed in both schools accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association and in schools of education, though all such programs seem to receive attention from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and/or other regional accrediting bodies. In Canada, school library media education programs are housed solely within schools/colleges of education.

The use of the term *workforce* in this article is inspired by the survey work of Sivak and Delong on the Canadian 8Rs and of Steffen and Lietzau on the Colorado 3Rs (both reported in an article in this issue and elsewhere), which look at workforce patterns across librarianship, including the SLMS in the case of the Colorado 3Rs work. Both give primary attention to recruitment, retention, and retirement trends. The Canadian 8Rs work also includes: reaccreditation (entry-level education), rejuvenation (midcareer professional renewal), repatriation (focused on Canadian librarians leaving Canada for jobs in the United States—translated here to trying to understand in- and out-flows to and from the SLMS), remuneration (benefits of the profession), and restructuring (efforts to reorganize staff or services to deal with new technologies or financial exigencies).

The view of the SLMS workforce taken in this article is also influenced by the life course perspective (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003; V. Marshall, Heinz, Krueger, & Verma, 2001). The life-course perspective attends to someone's experiences over time. Thus, it has a longitudinal aspect and enables examination of factors contributing to people's progress (or not), in this case in their work life, including family responsibilities, health changes, and the ebbs and flows of the economy. For an overview of the life course

perspective and its use in the design of the WILIS 1 survey, please see the article by V. Marshall, S. Rathbun-Grubb, and J. Marshall in this issue.

In order to explore SLMS workforce issues, this article relies on data collected through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)-funded Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science 1 (WILIS 1) project. WILIS 1, a three-year project, was designed to study the career patterns of graduates of library and information science (LIS) programs in North Carolina (NC). WILIS 1 is a collaboration of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science and Institute on Aging. The main goal of WILIS 1 is to investigate the educational, career, and retention issues that NC LIS graduates face in the workforce. For details about the WILIS 1 project, please see the overview article by Marshall et al. in this issue.

The school library media scene in North Carolina is unique in many ways. First, the state legislature provides funding for a SLMS in each school with an enrollment over 350. While such funding does not guarantee, due to site-based management, that a principal will, in fact, utilize the position and funding for a SLMS, principals have typically recognized the importance of having a professional SLMS in the school. North Carolina has five master's programs that produce SLMSs: Appalachian State University's Library Science Program, East Carolina University's Department of Library Science and Instructional Technology, North Carolina Central University's School of Library and Information Sciences, UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science and UNC-Greensboro's Department of Library and Information Studies. The last three in the list are accredited through the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association; East Carolina's program is seeking initial accreditation via ALA. All the programs meet NCATE requirements. There has been a robust demand for SLMSs, which is fed through graduates of one of these five programs, through lateral transfers of teachers who are required to meet state certification requirements for a SLM endorsement or by in-flow from other education programs for entry-level SLMSs or employment of experienced SLMSs from other states.

METHODOLOGY

The WILIS 1 Web-based survey collected data on the educational and work histories of respondents as well as their job and career satisfaction, continuing education needs, perspectives on trends in LIS, and other topics related to their LIS careers. Given the various steps that were taken to assess the representativeness of the respondents to the total population of alumni, including a nonresponse study—see Morgan, J. Marshall, V. Marshall and Thompson this issue, for more details of the methodology

for the WILIS 1 survey—we believe that the results provide a representative view of the population. While the results below are not representative of the SLMS situation across the United States, they are suggestive of issues and concerns which are likely to reach the SLMS to varying extents depending on their particular contexts.

The discussion now turns to an overview of data from the WILIS 1 survey to provide an understanding of SLMSs in relation to other types of librarians in North Carolina. Relevant data related to the 'Rs research mentioned above will then be offered. Finally, insights provided by a life course perspective will be offered.

OVERVIEW

Of the total 2,653 WILIS 1 respondents, 19 percent are currently working as SLMSs ($n = 497$); they represent 33 percent of the WILIS 1 respondents who are currently working in libraries. It will come as no surprise that those employed as SLMSs are predominantly female (96 percent) and are 8 percent nonwhite. This is in contrast to 82 percent female and 8 percent nonwhite across all WILIS 1 respondents. The mean age for a SLMSs was forty-nine (sd 9.7) with a median age of fifty-one. SLMSs were a bit older than other respondents: mean age was forty-eight (sd 10.9) and a median age of fifty. Ninety-four percent of SLMSs are full time versus 89 percent for all respondents. Seventy-three percent of SLMSs supervise others versus 60 percent for all respondents. The average SLMS salary is \$47,926 (median is \$48,000). The average salary for all respondents is \$51,952 (median is \$50,000). The 2007 American Library Association-Allied Professional Association Salary Survey indicates that the average librarian salary across the United States is \$57,809 (median is \$53,000).

Ninety percent of SLMSs noted that they had job autonomy (their own responsibility to decide how their job gets done). Sixty-eight percent agreed that there was not enough time to get required work done. Seventy-three percent agreed that their employer does a good job of helping develop their career. Only 45 percent of SLMSs agreed that they had opportunities for promotion within the field. Ninety-one percent of SLMSs agreed that they were satisfied with what they do in their job; 98 percent agreed that they were satisfied with LIS (library and information science) as a career. Table 1 provides a summary of this overview survey demographic information.

SLMSs are well represented in terms of current employment across the four categories of librarians in table 2, having the largest number and percentage.

SLMSs predominate even more among the newer graduates (see table 3), suggesting the strong job market for those who specialize in SLM in North Carolina at the time of the survey.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of WILIS 1 Survey Respondents

	Academic Library	Public Library	School Library	Special Library	Nonlibrary Setting
% Female	73%	81%	96%	77%	74%
% Non-White	12%	7%	8%	11%	14%
Median Age	48	49	51	47	51
Median Salary	\$49,500	\$46,000	\$48,000	\$57,835	\$62,400

Table 2. Current Job Type for Alumni Working in Libraries (*n* = 1,515), by Type of Library

	Number	Percentage
School (K-12)	500	33
Public	303	20
Academic	470	31
Special	242	16

Table 3. Current Job Type for Recent Graduates (2001–5) Working in Libraries (*n* = 378), by Type of Library

	Number	Percentage
School (K-12)	155	41
Public	64	17
Academic	106	28
Special	53	14

RETENTION AND RETIREMENT INTENTIONS

One area within the WILIS 1 survey focused on retention and retirement intentions. Figure 1 compares, by library type, the intentions of current librarians to stay, leave, or retire in the next three years. It is noteworthy that SLMSs have the highest rate of intention to stay (34 percent) as well as the highest rate of intention to retire (39 percent). About 9 percent of current SLMSs in North Carolina indicate an intention to leave to pursue another line of work.

Table 4 provides some insight into the transitions from their first job after completing their master's program to their current job. Of those who started in school libraries but have changed library types, 37 percent are working in public libraries, 39 percent are in academic libraries, and 24 percent are in special libraries or archives. Of those who started in public libraries but have changed library types, 36 percent are working in school libraries, 34 percent are in academic libraries, and 30 percent are in special libraries or archives. The reasons for such moves are varied and often de-

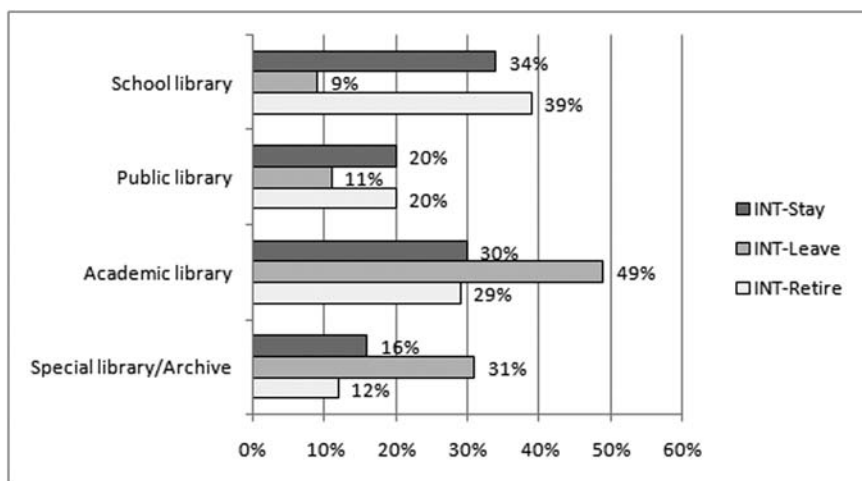


Figure 1. Comparison of Intentions to Stay, Leave, or Retire, by Library Type

pend on individual circumstances (e.g., moving from an area where SLMSs are regularly employed in K-12 schools to another where SLMSs are scarce, changes aimed at increased salary, friction with administrators).

One respondent noted numerous transitions in her career path:

I worked as a School Media Specialist following MLS degree; moved out of state and became a Children's Librarian/Assistant Branch Manager for a large public library, became a Reference Librarian and then Head of Adult Services at another large public library, left public services for position as Documentation Specialist for library services vendor, took position as Reference Librarian for a state library, then moved to Director of Library & Member Services for library membership organization.

Another comment provides an example of people who enjoy and perhaps seek work transitions:

[Before I was a school media teacher, I was a] Bell telephone operator, built railroad track, operated heavy equipment, teacher, and tax preparer. Now I plan to become a school administrator—upward movement. Just to explain [a previous job change], my ex told me that we were moving [out of NC] with his job so I resigned mine. Three days before the end of my school year he told me he was leaving. I never would have left that job if he hadn't been such a jerk. However, my life would take me to military base schools overseas in an attempt to fulfill a lifelong dream. I am adding school administration to English, special education, ESL, and library science.

Such transitions take a variety of forms and are encouraged for a variety of reasons:

Table 4. Extent of Mobility between Types of Libraries for Those Currently Working in Libraries

First Job After Program	Current Job				Total
	School Library	Public Library	Academic Library	Special Library/Archive	
Archive					
School Library (<i>n</i> = 38)	—	37%	39%	24%	100%
Public Library (<i>n</i> = 91)	36%	—	34%	30%	100%
Academic Library (<i>n</i> = 93)	19%	24%	—	43%	100%
Special Library/ Archive (<i>n</i> = 109)	8%	16%	76%	—	100%

I began teaching in 1983 as a middle school teacher. In 1986, I left teaching and began a career in banking. After a family move, I returned to teaching as a middle school teacher for 9 years. During this time I began working on an MLS degree and actually began working as a school librarian before finishing the degree. . . . Since then I have also begun and completed a Master's of School Administration.

Another example is from a married White female with two children. She graduated in the early-1990s with a master's degree in library science. She did not work in a library prior to her LIS program. She pursued a library and information science career because she thought it would be a good fit with her interests, allowing her to work with people and have a job that made a difference. At the beginning of her program she wanted to work in a public library, and she was able to fulfill this ambition as a youth services librarian in her first position after the program. This experience only lasted one year:

My second job in the library field was as an elementary school librarian in a large, relatively "wealthy" public school system. It was a great job, but there was never enough time to do everything I wanted. I attribute this to the nature of educational jobs. If I had continued in the information sector (and I do consider library work information), I would have gone back to school for another degree in technology and then looked for a job in a private setting. However, life situations change. We moved to another region of the country where education is not as highly valued (salaries much lower and resources lower too). I left school librarianship a little sooner than I had anticipated.

Now she works ten hours per week as an administrative assistant in the office of a jewelry store, a position that gives her a lot of control over

scheduling her hours. She has good working relationships with her co-workers. This position is a better work-family fit for her:

I moved into a "fun" part-time job that better fit my schedule. . . . Perhaps when my children are much older and I have more free time, I will pursue the aforementioned tech degree and find a job in the information sector again, but not as a librarian.

These examples provide hints at the work life course of people who have served as SLMSs and the factors beyond work, which influence career changes. They also provide some hints of career patterns, which those who are concerned with workforce issues in SLM and beyond need to be conscious of as they recruit and consider how to retain those worthy of keeping.

Table 5 provides an indication of the variety of position transitions of SLMSs beyond their first job after completing their master's degree program. Many of the current jobs in follow-up to a SLMS position seem to provide vehicles for individual growth and development, which are not evidently available as a SLMS.

Challenges particular to the school library media work environment are found in the career stories of the WILIS 1 survey respondents. For one SLMS, "controversy over adding sex education material to the collection led to a non-renewal of [her] contract." Thus, along with intentions, other happenings lead to moving on. Another school librarian complained of "school system politics" and an unprofessional environment in which the school library was viewed as a "babysitting mechanism for teachers." When the philosophies and policies of a school principal were at odds with the views of another media specialist, she left her job, noting that "my conscience wouldn't allow me to continue to work for someone who was unethical."

Another former librarian commented on pay for performance as an issue: "the state salary [of school librarians] focuses on years of experience . . . not on doing a good job or honest day's work. After seventeen years of that, I wanted to work where the harder I worked, the more earning potential I had." Others who cite earnings mismatches as a barrier to job and career satisfaction also mention temporal mismatches; they need to work fewer hours to be able to take care of children or other family members, but they cannot reduce their hours without losing their health insurance and other benefits.

As noted earlier, the SLMS job is demanding. While some may think that the SLMS job is just about books and reading to children, it is not likely that someone with this focus will succeed as a SLMS:

Before I graduated I realized I had probably made a mistake in pursuing teaching certification, but too late then. When I graduated with

Table 5. Occupational Changes of Former School Librarians

Representative Job Titles— Job after LIS Program	Representative Job Titles— Current Job
Elementary Media Coordinator	Assistant Professor—Library Science
High School Librarian	Bookstore Owner
Media Coordinator	Compliance Director, Financial Services
Media Specialist	Continuing Education/Alumni Coordinator, Program
LIS	Director of Membership Services, LIS Association
Middle School Librarian	ESL Lead Teacher
Professional	
School Librarian	
School Media Specialist	
Executive Director, non-profit	
Pharmacist	
Preacher	
Principal	
Regulatory Affairs Lead, electric utility	
Sales Consultant (book industry)	
Senior Manager of Public Affairs, government agency	
Special Education teacher	
State Level Chief for Instructional Technology	
VP Organizational Consulting	
Writer/Novelist	

my LIS degree, I found employment in the school system where I had grown up. I enjoyed working with the books and reading stories to the children, but was weak in other areas and did not receive an offer of tenure.

There is some evidence that the pressures of the SLMS job are increasing. When asked to compare their current job situations to their experience five years ago, respondents indicated that the SLM is a busier, more demanding work environment. Seventy-three percent agree that they “feel more pressure to continually learn new skills,” and 67 percent note that they “must work harder.” Eighty-one percent are now “required to perform more new tasks” on the job, and SLMSs view them as “more difficult” (59 percent), “more high tech” (87 percent), and of a wider variety (85 percent). In spite of the additional technology-related workload, many SLMSs are willing to embrace the challenge. For instance, a media specialist who retired and has returned to work states that “LIS professionals must be willing to adapt to new technologies and embrace their role as technology leaders in the community and schools.”

In addition to working harder, SLMSs are taking on more managerial duties (68 percent) and leadership roles (77 percent). One SLMS is frustrated with the lack of assistance available to her as her role has

expanded: "In too many school libraries, there is not enough clerical help for all the responsibilities that are required of the library/media coordinator. School library/media coordinators are expected to collaborate and teach more and more, yet all the work in a library is their responsibility, consequently more clerical help is needed."

While National Board Certification was in its relatively early stages at the time of the WILIS 1 survey, there are some hints in the *other* responses that the National Board Certification process served to reinvigorate those who participated. We have one comment, which provides substance to these hints: "Media coordinators I have talked with who have survived this process tell me that while it is grueling, it also is gratifying professionally, helping them to be more reflective about their programs and responsibilities as well as to become better practitioners." North Carolina now has a good number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT), including media coordinators. NBCT in North Carolina currently have their application fee paid, receive three days of release time to prepare for the board examination, and gain a 12 percent salary increase.

RECRUITMENT

Table 6 provides summary statistics related to the factors that influenced current SLMSs to enter an LIS master's degree program.

The factors that had a minimal impact in terms of influencing the respondents to become a librarian were guidance counselor and recruitment by a LIS program. Salary, length of training, and volunteering were next in line in terms of relatively minimal impact, but about twenty-five of the respondents were influenced either a lot or to a moderate extent by salary, training length, and volunteering. The most prominent attractors were the factors of fit with interests, likes working with people, and job that would help make a difference, perhaps reflecting the helping ethic of librarianship as a whole. The remaining attractors focus on following the lead of friends and family, and finding a fit between family and work life along with job availability. Issues of recruitment of minorities and attracting the best and brightest to careers in SLM are beyond the scope of the WILIS 1 survey. Yet, knowing that most of these attractors have some benefit in recruitment suggests the need to get a message out in a more coherent fashion emphasizing the whole of the attractors. The roles of friends, family, and volunteer mentors may be one to take particular note of. While these are not the strongest of attractors, their moderate strength suggests that their *power* might be enhanced by efforts to help those who value librarianship as a profession to recognize their roles as ambassadors in making libraries attractive and welcoming places, while encouraging patrons to consider librarianship as a profession. It is worth mentioning that a good number of the *other* open-ended responses related to factors

Table 6. Factors Influencing Decision to Enter an LIS Program (*n* = 507)

Factors	A Lot	A Moderate Amount	A Little	Not at All
Good fit with interests	66.9%	27.9%	2.6%	2.6%
Liked working with people	52.3%	34.1%	8.3%	5.3%
Wanted a job where I could make a difference	50.5%	32.9%	9.5%	7.1%
Flexible educational options for working adult	32.8%	17.0%	12.5%	37.7%
Fit with family responsibilities	30.2%	22.3%	16.8%	30.6%
Availability of jobs	27.5%	31.2%	17.4%	23.9%
Worked as an assistant in a library or information center	25.0%	12.9%	9.5%	52.6%
Friend or family member worked in LIS	24.4%	13.5%	9.3%	52.8%
Always wanted to be a librarian	23%	16.7%	23.0%	37.3%
Friend or family recommended LIS	22.7%	12.6%	9.1%	55.4%
Flexible career options	17.8%	27.8%	28.4%	26.0%
Like working with computers	15.3%	25.2%	19.6%	39.9%
Benefits	9.5%	21.6%	24.4%	44.6%
Volunteered in a library or information setting	7.9%	17.0%	18.6%	56.4%
Length of training	7.9%	17.0%	18.6%	56.4%
Salary	7.3%	18.4%	28.3%	45.9%
Recruitment by LIS program	1.0%	1.8%	3.2%	94.0%
Guidance counselor	.2%	0%	1.0%	98.2%

influencing the decision to enter an LIS program specifically mention encouragement by a teacher or SLMS. Also, the possibility of National Board Certification was mentioned, in particular, as an attractor to SLM.

RETENTION

While there has not been much research focusing on turnover among SLMSs, research that focuses on the K-12 teaching profession, in general, points to high rates of attrition. Nearly 25 percent of new teachers exit the profession within the first four years (Benner, 2000; Rowan, 2002). In studies of teacher turnover it has been shown that teachers who left the profession were dissatisfied with their workload and salaries, and were unhappy with an environment that provided little in terms of career growth, promotion, and challenge (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982; Doering & Rhodes, 1989; Smithers & Robinson, 2003). Large class sizes, a negative or violent school culture, student misbehavior, low salaries, administrative bureaucracies, and unclear expectations are difficult obstacles to negotiate, even for seasoned teachers. A new teacher does not always leave the

student teaching practicum with a realistic picture of what to anticipate that first year on her own (Smithers & Robinson, 2003), and unfortunately, she may not have the benefit of being coached by a mentor-teacher, leaving her to feel isolated, overwhelmed, and unsupported.

Interviews with teachers are a common method for ascertaining turn-over intentions and career satisfaction. Hargens (2005) interviewed ten high school teachers after their third year of teaching. The teachers who remained at the same school were satisfied with administrative support and did not experience problems with student discipline; however, they did not plan to teach for the rest of their careers because of the lack of opportunities for advancement. Those teachers who transferred to a different school indicated that their reasons for transfer were based mainly on a lack of support from the administration. The teachers who left the profession altogether cited the following as their main reasons for leaving: a lack of support from the school administration, feelings of isolation and a lack of influence, and student discipline problems. Scheib's (2004) study of music instructors in public schools found that most of the teachers experienced difficult working conditions and were dissatisfied with their salaries, the low status of teachers in society, and the low priorities placed on music education.

Other research has focused on factors related to teacher retention. Blanson (2005) interviewed thirteen teachers who had remained in the profession from five to thirty-three years in urban schools. The teachers indicated that what kept them in these schools was their perception that they were "making a difference" in students' lives, as well as having the support of the school administration. Wade (2001) studied National Board Certified secondary mathematics teachers and concluded that the commitment shown to the profession by earning this certification earned these educators new responsibilities, career development, and greater confidence and recognition, and resulted in greater retention rates.

There is evidence in the WILIS 1 responses (see table 7) that many of the findings of attrition and retention studies of teachers carry over to SLMS, though some of the factors such as isolation and student discipline are at least softened a bit in the SLMC.

All of these retention/attrition factors are real to some of those who left SLM. Of these some resonate with those mentioned in studies of teacher attrition, such as more challenging/interesting projects, better opportunities for career development and growth, better working environment, better salary, better benefits, and better working hours. A principal or higher-level administrator may actually have some ability to address most of these. Annual performance reviews should help identify issues, which may be addressable. An experienced and effective SLMS may be able to "recharge her batteries" when provided the opportunity to participate in

Table 7: Reasons for Leaving School Librarianship (*n* = 105)

Reason	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
More challenging or interesting projects	46.1%	14.7%	39.2%
Better opportunities for career development or growth	43.1%	12.7%	44.1%
Better working environment	32.4%	15.7%	52%
Seeking better quality of management	24.5%	15.7%	59.8%
Better salary	21.6%	17.6%	60.8%
Better working hours	12.6%	18.4%	68.9%
The opportunity to use leading-edge technology	17.6%	12.7%	69.6%
Moved to another location	23.5%	4.9%	71.6%
Wanted to use my LIS skills	21.6%	6.9%	71.6%
Better benefits	11.8%	10.8%	77.5%
Completed LIS degree	7.9%	5.9%	82.9%
Retired	14.7%	—	85.3%
Promotion	10.8%	2.0%	87.3%
Became a parent/caregiver	8.8%	1.0%	96.1%

school- or district-level committees or to open the media center in a new school. As already mentioned, the National Board Certification process is another means of reinvigoration.

CAREER PROGRESSION PATTERNS AND SATISFACTION

Beyond the examples provided earlier in the article with regard to various patterns of shifting into and out of service as a SLMS, data was gathered on job moves in a career. Table 8 provides overview statistics on job moves.

It should be kept in mind that respondents are in varying places in their careers. Consequently, there were some (5.4 percent) who had only one job so far or in some cases for their entire career. Career shifts predominate, however, as more than 91 percent of respondents reported two or more job moves so far in their career. It is interesting, too, that more than 60 percent of respondents characterized their job shifts as either moving up or laterally. The nature of these job shifts varies with some respondents leaving the school scene entirely, but many move to other school/education-related positions in library science education, as principals and other administrators in schools and school systems. The bottom line is that, one way or another; more than 91 percent of respondents find a way to vary their careers through some job move. Thus, career change and progression seems to be an important force for respondents who have been called to SLM. These people need, by and large, to find new ways of expressing themselves professionally.

Table 8. Career Progression Patterns ($n = 410$)

Job Moves	Frequency	Percentage
Two or more jobs, moving up	104	25.4
Two or more jobs, moving both laterally and up	143	34.9
Two more jobs, moving laterally only	57	13.9
Two or more jobs, moving laterally and down	1	.2
Three or more jobs, moving both up and down	70	17.1
One job (no moves)	22	5.4
Don't know	13	2.8

Whatever the internal forces are that encourage individuals to shift jobs; overall, respondents who are or have been SLMSs are satisfied with LIS as a career. In fact, less than 2 percent of these respondents expressed dissatisfaction with LIS as a career, and an impressive number (more than 58 percent) strongly agreed that they were satisfied with LIS as a career.

The picture is only slightly different when the SLMS respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with what they do in their jobs. While 91 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their jobs, the remaining 9 percent expressed some level of dissatisfaction. It appears that there are aspects of SLMS jobs (some mentioned previously), which make it easy for a respondent to indicate so in the WILIS 1 survey. This dissatisfaction may well lead someone to shift jobs. Yet, overall these people are satisfied with their profession. To some extent, close to 99 percent view their job as a part of a career.

There is an important message here, which needs to be emphasized in recruiting people to SLM in particular and LIS in general, that information professionals are satisfied with their work, whatever bumps and strains occur across their career life courses.

RETIREMENT

Retirement is an issue that is difficult to pin down. It is clear that one way or another SLMSs' career life courses will end as ill health or a variety of other life issues intervene—"I love what I do, but I have just had enough." In the face of the current severe economic downturn, which seems to be impacting the public sphere as heavily as the private sphere, the "best laid plans" expressed in the WILIS 1 survey are only plans (and plans are made to be broken?).

Among the survey questions was one that asked: "Do you ever expect to retire from paid work completely?" It is interesting that almost 20 percent of the SLMS respondents answered NO. It appears that these respondents look forward to being professionally active throughout their life course.

The responses (see table 9) of SLMS respondents to questions regarding the chances that they will be working full time after reaching the ages of sixty-two and sixty-five may provide some insight into plans, which may

Table 9. What Are the Chances You Will Be Working Full Time after You Reach Age 62 (*n* = 464)? 65 (*n* = 374)?

Chance of Working?	Age 62		Age 65	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
No chance	74	15.9	131	35.0
10–30	128	25.2	116	24.9
40–60	87	17.2	57	11.3
70–90	96	20.8	44	11.8
Definitely continue to work	91	17.9	14	3.7

be stretched somewhat due to economic uncertainty or adjusted due to cutbacks in funding for public education.

SLMSs more often than not participate in state and other public retirement systems that have a defined benefit, which is based on years of service and some salary level—in North Carolina the Teachers and State Employees Retirement System uses an average of the highest four years of salary. The benefit received by someone covered by these systems is based on reaching a certain age and years-of-service combination (e.g., in North Carolina someone may retire with full retirement benefits with thirty years of service, age sixty with twenty-five years of service, and age sixty-five with five years of service). The point is that there may be a certain pressure to retire in a defined benefit retirement plan when full eligibility is achieved, as an employee may suddenly be working for a portion of their salary. On the other hand, as many SLMSs begin work after another career (or careers), including raising a family, there may be a pressure to continue working to achieve additional retirement benefits, if not full retirement benefits.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the information and interpretations provided in this article will offer “food for thought” for those who are engaged in workforce planning for SLM and for those who frame what they are doing in SLMCs as a labor of love in providing a context for learning beyond the classroom. The data from the WILIS 1 survey respondents suggests a particular need for SLMSs to achieve some form of variety in their work. This may happen by moving to a new school, becoming involved in professional activities at national, state, or local levels, participating in the National Board Certification process, or participating in innovation efforts in school or school system. Frequently SLMSs move on to other library and information jobs or to administrative positions in schools or school systems. The major point to be made from this data is that administrators within schools and school districts, including district level media personnel, can make a difference in supporting the continuing variety and growth, which seems to keep the best of SLMSs contributing to student learning.

It is important also to continue research, both through extensive surveys such as the WILIS 1 survey, which provide indications of broad patterns of concern among SLMSs and other information professionals, and intensive efforts that get at the dynamics of career life course, to continue to fine-tune recruiting and retention efforts as well as plan for retirements and other issues related to the various 'Rs mentioned earlier in this article.

NOTES

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